

WE CLAIM:

1 A method of combining digital image meta-data by storing self-describing
attribute tags with one or more meta-data elements, each such attribute describing the
5 action to be taken with this meta-data element and a similarly identified meta-data
element from a second digital-image when the two images are combined.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the self describing attribute tags
include a tag which indicates that the meta-data elements in question should be discarded
10 when the two images are combined.

3. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the self describing attribute tags
include a tag which indicates that the meta-data elements in question should both be kept
15 when the two images are combined.

4. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the self describing attribute tags
include a tag which indicates that the meta-data elements in question should be kept as a
single element when their values are the same, else discarded, when the two images are
20 combined.

5. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein in the event a said image has associated
therewith a said meta-data element having no self describing attribute tag, then the
method comprises the step of:

supplying a default self describing attribute tag to said meta-data element which
25 has no self describing attribute tag.

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6. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the default attribute tag includes a tag which indicates that the meta-data elements in question should be kept as a single element when their values are the same, else discarded, when the images are combined.

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7. A method of updating meta-data of an digital image by storing self describing attribute tags with one or more meta-data elements, each such attribute describing the action to be taken with this meta-data element when the digital image is transformed.

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8. A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the self describing attribute tags include a tag which indicates that the meta-data elements in question should be discarded when the image is transformed.

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9. A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the self describing attribute tags include a tag which indicates that the meta-data element in question should be kept when the image is transformed.

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10. A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein in the event said image has associated therewith a said meta-data element having no attribute tag, then the method comprises the step of:

supplying a default attribute tag to said meta-data element.

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11. A method of combining a plurality of images, wherein one or more of said plurality of images each have associated therewith meta-data comprising at least one meta-data element having at least one attribute tag which describes an action to be taken

with said meta-data element when said plurality of images are combined, the method comprising the steps of:

reading said at least one attribute to identify said action; and

combining the meta-data elements of the plurality of images in accordance with said action.

12. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the at least one attribute tag includes a tag which indicates that the meta-data elements in question should be discarded when the images are combined.

13. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the at least one attribute tag includes a tag which indicates that the meta-data elements in question should both be kept when the images are combined.

14. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the at least one attribute tags includes a tag which indicates that the meta-data elements in question should be kept as a single element when their values are the same, else discarded, when the images are combined.

15. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein in the event a said image has associated therewith a said meta-data element having no attribute tag, then the method comprises the step of:

supplying a default attribute tag to said meta-data element which has no attribute tag.

16. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the default attribute tag includes a tag which indicates that the meta-data elements in question should be kept as a single element when their values are the same, else discarded, when the images are combined.

5 17. A method of transforming an image, wherein said image has associated therewith meta-data comprising at least one meta-data element having at least one attribute tag which describes an action to be taken with said meta-data element when said image is transformed, the method comprising the steps of:

reading said at least one attribute to identify said action; and

10 updating the at least one meta-data element of the image in accordance with said action.

15 18. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein the at least one attribute tag includes a tag which indicates that the meta-data elements in question should be discarded when the image is transformed.

20 19. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein the at least one attribute tag includes a tag which indicates that the meta-data element in question should be kept when the image is transformed.

20. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein in the event said image has associated therewith a said meta-data element having no attribute tag, then the method comprises the step of:

supplying a default attribute tag to said meta-data element.

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21. Apparatus for combining digital image meta-data by storing self-describing attribute tags with one or more meta-data elements, each such attribute describing the action to be taken with this meta-data element and a similarly identified meta-data element from a second digital-image when the two images are combined.

22. Apparatus for updating meta-data of an digital image by storing self describing attribute tags with one or more meta-data elements, each such attribute describing the action to be taken with this meta-data element when the digital image is transformed.

10 23. Apparatus for combining a plurality of images, wherein one or more of said plurality of images each have associated therewith meta-data comprising at least one meta-data element having at least one attribute tag which describes an action to be taken with said meta-data element when said plurality of images are combined, the apparatus comprising:

15 means for reading said at least one attribute to identify said action; and
means for combining the meta-data elements of the plurality of images in accordance with said action.

20 24. Apparatus for transforming an image, wherein said image has associated therewith meta-data comprising at least one meta-data element having at least one attribute tag which describes an action to be taken with said meta-data element when said image is transformed, the apparatus comprising:

means for reading said at least one attribute to identify said action; and
means for updating the at least one meta-data element of the image in accordance
25 with said action.

25 Computer readable medium including a computer program for combining digital image meta-data by storing self-describing attribute tags with one or more meta-data elements, each such attribute describing the action to be taken with this meta-data element and a similarly identified meta-data element from a second digital-image when the two images are combined.

26. Computer readable medium including a computer program for updating meta-data of an digital image by storing self describing attribute tags with one or more meta-data elements, each such attribute describing the action to be taken with this meta-data element when the digital image is transformed.

27. Computer readable medium including a computer program for combining a plurality of images, wherein one or more of said plurality of images each have associated therewith meta-data comprising at least one meta-data element having at least one attribute tag which describes an action to be taken with said meta-data element when said plurality of images are combined, the computer program comprising:

code for reading said at least one attribute to identify said action; and

code for combining the meta-data elements of the plurality of images in accordance with said action.

28. Computer readable medium including a computer program for transforming an image, wherein said image has associated therewith meta-data comprising at least one meta-data element having at least one attribute tag which describes an action to be taken

